

**The Tennessee
Department of Children's Services**

**Path to Excellence
Implementation Plan**

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The Tennessee Department of Children's Services Path to Excellence Implementation Plan

Purpose

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) is committed to development of the partnerships, infrastructure, and resources fundamental to the achievement of improved outcomes for children and families in Tennessee. The primary purpose of the Path to Excellence Implementation Plan is to provide the structure to bring the Department into compliance with the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*. The Implementation Plan is focused on a set of desired child welfare outcomes and goals in eight key domains that are supported by relevant strategies and action plans designed to achieve these important goals and outcomes.

Domain Summary

The eight domains of focus in this plan are expressed in terms of four components: desired outcomes, most recent achievements, goals and strategies, and action plans. The eight domains are as follows:

Domain I: Leadership and Management

This domain focuses on the restructuring of DCS to provide greater focus on building regional competencies and implementing the *Standards of Professional Practice for Serving Children and Families* (the *Practice Model*).

Domain II: Creating and Sustaining a Diverse and Qualified Workforce

The focus of this domain is the development of plans, training supports, and assessment strategies needed to recruit and retain a diverse and well-qualified workforce.

Domain III: Child and Family Team Meetings

This domain describes the development of child and family team meetings as an infrastructure for the improvement of regional performance in the area of permanency planning.

Domain IV: Child Protective Services

Highlighted in this domain are strategies for improving the Department's performance in the timely investigation of Child Protective Service (CPS) referrals, prioritizing response times for initiating investigations, decision-making based on the results of an investigation, and identifying supports and resources for families and children. Of critical importance is ensuring that, for those custodial children for whom there has been an allegation of abuse or neglect while in care, the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) completes a timely, comprehensive and quality investigation. Special emphasis is given to investigations involving children in DCS custody.

Domain V: Placement Process

This domain focuses on expanding the number of children placed with their own families and within their own communities as well as ensuring that all children are placed in the setting most appropriate to their needs.

Domain VI: Foster, Kinship, and Adoptive Home Development and Support

Increasing the number of foster and adoptive homes so that children can be placed in the most appropriate, least restrictive, most family-like environment possible within their own communities is one of the main areas of focus in this domain. Also described are strategies for improving the identification and approval process for kinship homes.

Domain VII: Resource Development

Covered in this domain is a plan for improving performance in areas related to fund maximization, service development and provision, and provider agency accountability.

Domain VIII: Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement

Developing the infrastructure for a comprehensive system for quality assurance and continuous quality improvement as well as improving the quality and relevance of data management to child welfare practices and outcomes are covered in this domain.

Background

This Implementation Plan is the result of a lawsuit filed in May 2000 on behalf of children in foster care in Tennessee alleging wide-spread deficiencies in the way the state managed the foster care system. The lawsuit, known as *Brian A.*, was resolved in July 2001 by a settlement agreement that addressed virtually every aspect of the work done by the Department. The settlement contemplated monitoring based on three 18-month time periods, the first ending on February 28, 2003. After the end of the first monitoring period the Monitor prepared a report on the Department's compliance with the settlement agreement that noted significant areas of non-compliance.

As a result of the compliance reporting by the Monitor, the Plaintiffs filed a motion for contempt against the state on November 20, 2003. The Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) also released a document on December 10, 2003, which memorialized the status of the TAC's work, identified barriers to the successful progress of a reform effort, and suggested an agenda for the development of an implementation plan. As the parties prepared to litigate the contempt motion, John Mattingly, of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, who had selected the TAC's members and convened the TAC after the original settlement agreement, approached the parties about mediating a settlement of the contempt proceeding. On December 23, 2003, the Governor appointed Viola Miller as the new Commissioner of the Department.

Commissioner Miller immediately began participating in mediation as arranged by John Mattingly. The result was a stipulation resolving the contempt motion that was presented to and approved by the court on December 30, 2003. A primary feature of the stipulation is the development of this Implementation Plan. The stipulation provides that the Implementation Plan will consist of goals, strategies, action steps, benchmarks, responsibilities and time lines in each of nine substantive areas deemed critical to achieving compliance with the *Brian A.* Settlement

Agreement. The eighth and ninth substantive areas were collapsed into a single section so that there are eight “domains” in the final plan. In an effort to create a process that will allow the Department sufficient flexibility, the stipulation contemplates that goals and strategies of the Implementation Plan will become part of an enforceable court order, modifiable only by subsequent court order in addition to the TAC’s approval. The action steps, benchmarks, responsibilities and time lines will not be court-enforceable, however, and may, under certain circumstances, be changed with the approval of the TAC.

The stipulation contemplates that during an initial planning process (through June 14, 2004) the TAC will advise and support the Department in the development of the Implementation Plan. At the end of that process, the Implementation Plan will be provided to the TAC and the plaintiffs for a 30-day consultation and comment period. The Department will then present the Implementation Plan to the TAC and the TAC will have 10 days to either endorse the plan or make suggested changes which the Department must either adopt or reject within an additional 10 days. Once the TAC endorses the Implementation Plan, the goals and strategies will be presented to the Court for approval. If the Department were to reject the TAC’s changes, both plans would be submitted to the Court, and the Court may choose between the two plans or fashion other appropriate relief.

The Settlement Agreement itself (subject to the specific modifications made in the Stipulation) remains in full force and effect at all times. Absent violations of the Settlement Agreement presenting significant danger to the safety and well-being of members of the Plaintiff Class, Plaintiffs have agreed to forego seeking a finding of non-compliance or contempt for violations of the Settlement Agreement for a period of 12 months following approval of the Implementation Plan (the “Forbearance Period”). In various places, the Implementation Plan sets dates by which DCS is to accomplish tasks and meet identified performance and outcome measures, including a number of dates that fall outside of the Forbearance Period. To the extent that the provisions of the Implementation Plan, including those provisions that identify dates outside of the Forbearance Period, are less stringent than the requirements of the Settlement Agreement, the terms of the Settlement Agreement supersede and are enforceable as written. The inclusion of such provisions in the Implementation Plan shall not be construed as a waiver or limitation of Plaintiffs’ rights to enforce the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* (as modified by the Stipulation).

Similarly, Defendants also retain their bargained-for rights under the Settlement Agreement. For instance, for management purposes the Implementation Plan addresses the provision of CPS services to both non-class members and class members. The Implementation Plan also references efforts to serve the juvenile justice population, which is comprised of non-class members. These and any other such references do not expand the enforceability of either the Settlement Agreement or the Implementation Plan beyond the class described in the Settlement Agreement. Enforceability is strictly limited to the requirements of the Settlement Agreement and the enforceable provisions of the Implementation Plan.

Major Accomplishments January – June 2004

1. Established Department of Children’s Services Core Leadership Team.
2. Established Core Leadership Team members to serve as liaisons for Regional Leadership and Core Implementation Teams.
3. Began implementation of the *Practice Model*.

4. DCS Commissioner met with over 1,000 employees regarding implementation of the *Practice Model* and quality child welfare service delivery.
5. DCS Commissioner met with key Community Service Agency staff to begin negotiation of contracts that are outcome-focused and in alignment with the *Practice Model*.
6. DCS staff met with key private providers to initiate implementation of continuum study recommendations, specifically addressing percentage of Level II & III children in foster home settings.
7. Initiated flex fund restructuring and simplification.
8. Finalized foster home approval for over 1,000 kinship providers.
9. Began developing Independent Living five-year plan with broad-based community involvement.
10. Began development of University Training Consortium to support, enhance, and expand DCS's staff development resources.

Plan Structure

Broadly, the primary aims of this implementation plan concern keeping children safe, achieving permanency for children, and ensuring the short- and long-term well being of children and their families through the identification and provision of quality services in a timely manner and in keeping with best practice models. Toward these ends, the more specific aims of this plan involve enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency through planning, communicating, infrastructure building, resource development, measurement, and learning as these processes relate to human resource and organizational development efforts. These aims are interconnected by five crosscutting themes that are summarized—along with *Brian A.* outcomes, major accomplishments, and resources—in this overview to the plan.

Part 2 contains the plan and outlines the desired outcomes, goals and strategies for each of the plan's eight domains. The desired outcomes represent the Department's vision for excellence in the short, intermediate and long term while the goals represent the specific time-framed accomplishments DCS must achieve to realize that vision for excellence, and the strategies are the more specific methods by which the goals will be achieved.

Crosscutting Themes

Many substantive areas addressed in this Implementation Plan cut across many of the domains. Recent work by DCS to implement changes in casework practice illustrate how inextricably intertwined these themes are to the work in each domain. These themes are present throughout the plan and serve to focus the Department's goals, strategies, actions, allocation of resources, and sense of urgency. These themes and others were previously identified in the *Standards of Professional Practice*, a model for practice that was developed as a result of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement and with the support of the TAC. The current Implementation Plan seeks to put those principles and standards into the day-to-day operation of the Department.

Theme 1 Strengthening the Relationship between Central Office Staff and Regional Staff

Undergirding the domains, goals, and strategies is a planned set of actions designed to strengthen, and in some cases build, core relationships and competencies within and between

Central Office and regional staff. Using the planning and implementation process itself, DCS has the opportunity to use both external and internal subject matter experts to model, coach and mentor thoughtful, critical thinking throughout the agency. The Path to Excellence offers an opportunity to enhance and strengthen the necessary partnership between the regional and Central Office staff. Concentrated efforts in the first three to six months will focus on staff in Central Office and three regions. We believe that concentrating energy, resources, time, and attention on a more limited number of staff allows us to build solid “in house” capacity as well as to learn and grow from our strengths and successes. Executive level Department of Children’s Services staff will be working closely with nationally recognized child welfare consultants to address specific and necessary programmatic change. For example, Sarah Greenblatt with Casey Family Programs will be working with Elizabeth Black and three Regional Administrators/regions to address the need for reform in the agency’s adoption services. The provisions of the Settlement Agreement remain in effect for all twelve regions and will be monitored consistently and regularly for compliance by the DCS QA/CQI Division (see Domain VIII). Statewide rollout of all strategies has been scheduled in a sequential manner from August 2004 through May 31, 2007, which is the end of Period III as extended by the Stipulation, and the implementation of each goal and strategy will also be monitored by the DCS QA/CQI Division on an ongoing basis to ensure timeliness and quality performance.

Investing regional leadership with greater decision-making authority and holding regional leadership more directly responsible and accountable for outcomes for children and families resulting from those decisions is the primary focus of all of the Department’s reform efforts. The organizational change will converge around differences in the structural relationship between the regions and Central Office. Examples of these differences in the relationship include:

- Regions will be trained in July to assume responsibility for preparing, reviewing and approving adoption subsidy requests. In the past, Central Office totally controlled decisions related to adoption subsidies.
- RAs will implement an employee performance evaluation system that holds all staff accountable for their individual job performance and that ultimately focuses all staff on their individual accountability for providing quality services for children and families. In the past, approximately fifty percent of staff were not evaluated annually. Currently, DCS has identified one full-time position to ensure all employees participate in an employee evaluation process.
- The development and implementation of a DCS/Provider cross – functional team. The DCS/Provider cross-functional team will focus initially on addressing the need to develop a unified placement system. Currently within DCS alone there are resource management staff, foster care support staff, case managers who work with mixed results with private providers to serve DCS children and their families. Simplifying and focusing these multiple relationships will be the focus of work in the early stages of the Cross-Functional Teams.

However, the larger purpose of the Departmental Level DCS/Provider cross-functional team, chaired by Judy Cole and Suzanne White, will be to act as a catalyst for cross-functional teams at the regional level. These regional cross-functional teams, as well as the DCS/Provider cross-functional team, will serve as an on-going support/consensus for building a unified placement process. Much like a Child and

Family Team meeting, all the parties have to come to the table to build a team around the system. Again like a Child and Family Team meeting, the DCS/Provider cross-functional teams will be a developmental process, not an event. Examples of issues relevant to these teams: performance based contracting, implementing the continuum study recommendations, and promoting adoptions. These items are meant to be illustrative, not an exhaustive identification of process steps. Regional DCS/Provider cross-functional teams will report to Regional Implementation Teams, and the Department level DCS/Provider cross-functional team will report to the Core Leadership Team.

In the past, Central Office made the decisions that the Regions were expected to implement. Now, Central Office will establish the overarching goals of the organization and the parameters for decision-making, and Regional Administrators will be given the authority to develop their own plans and make their own decisions and will routinely be held accountable for money, staff, program outcomes, and *Brian A.* compliance. To support the Regions, Regional Implementation Teams and Continuous Quality Improvement Teams will be established, both consisting of internal and external stakeholders that could range from DCS frontline staff and foster parents to CSA representatives, service providers, advocates, educators, or members of the judiciary. Implementation Teams will assist the regions in implementing regional plans, and Continuous Quality Improvement Teams will assess regional activities for effectiveness and efficiency and provide immediate feedback to the Regional Leadership and Implementation Teams as well as to Central Office.

Theme 2 Increasing Infrastructure Support

Increasing Infrastructure Support is another theme that threads throughout the Implementation Plan. Infrastructure support must demonstrate a deeper understanding, awareness, and sense of responsibility for achieving better outcomes for children and families. Recent steps taken to achieve this level of accountability include the significant efforts over the past four months focused on developing a University Training Consortium to provide a variety of options to recruit degreed Social Work child welfare staff at the BSW and MSSW level. Additional steps to be taken over the next six to nine months to increase infrastructure support include the following:

1. Issue an RFP to secure a vendor who will assist DCS technology staff in completing SACWIS (state automated child welfare information system) requirements. Having a fully operational/compliant SACWIS system is critical if DCS is to collect and report relevant data.
2. Continue collaboration with Fred Wulczyn and Lynn Usher to address data analysis of Tennessee outcomes related to custodial children.
3. Continue work with Terri Ali through Anne E. Casey Foundation to address foster care recruitment and retention. Request assistance from Denise Goodman to assess pre-service resource parent training.
4. Address systemic issues related to CPS backlog. Initial steps will include process mapping the CPS system and work with Chris Baird to complete a preliminary workload analysis of CPS case managers.
5. Continue collaboration with Sarah Greenblatt, Casey Family Services, to address necessary adoption services improvements.

6. Engage Dr. Chris Billonce's assistance in DCS's implementation of policies and practices to avoid the improper reliance on restraints and seclusion or on improper use of medication.
7. Continue work to implement the continuum study recommendations.
8. Review and begin streamlining the flex funding process to support effective use of flexible and needs assessment funds. For State Fiscal Year 2005, approximately \$4.5 million has been allocated to the regions for child-specific needs. An additional \$3.5 million is available to the Department to assist in implementing the Path to Excellence.
9. Develop and implement a revised performance evaluation process. Initial work to focus on Regional Administrators.
10. Develop contract with Marge Gildner to assist in completing the revision of the Pre-Service curriculum and the overall development and implementation of quality, professional training for DCS staff.

For each of these infrastructure developments, the Department will develop detailed action steps to bring about the necessary organizational support. For example, DCS will develop a detailed pre-service training plan and a social work skills training plan to be submitted to the TAC for approval by September 15, 2004. The following specific issues will be addressed:

- Identification of the number of DCS new and existing case managers who need to be trained.
- Determination of the resources needed to complete this training as well as the number of trainers DCS will allocate to this task.¹
- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the OJT staff, the number of OJT staff deemed necessary by the Department to meet these roles and responsibilities, and the basis for concluding that the number of OJT staff are sufficient to meet these roles and responsibilities.
- Determination of staffing allocations sufficient to support the implementation of Child and Family Team Meetings.²
- Provision of background information on fifty staff members who are/will be coach facilitators, with details regarding how they either will or already have developed their

¹ Identification of Training Resources to Support Training

Based on the number of existing DCS staff (Team Leaders, CM3s, and CM2s), plus new case managers anticipated to be hired, the following training resources will be committed to train all staff in the Tennessee Certification Program over an 18-month period, beginning September 2004:

55 groups of existing case managers (CM2s)	18 Trainers
33 groups of new case managers (hired CM2s and CM1s)	12 Trainers
22 groups of supervisors (CM4s and CM3s)	6 Trainers
Total	36 Trainers

This number includes trainers who would perform tasks associated with the best practice components of interactive and targeted coaching during the classroom training to a maximum of 20 participants delivered by 3 trainers. The University Consortium, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and senior management staff from each region will make a contribution to ensuring the training is completed and integrated into daily practice.

² To identify the number of facilitators needed, we considered the number of entries, re-entries, exits, and placement changes expected to occur in a year based on entry cohort data files and then determined the following:

1. We calculated that the total number of CFTM's per year would equal 26,604.
2. We estimated that each CFTM would require two hours for a total of 53,208 meeting hours.
3. We estimated the number of facilitators needed based on a calculation of 53,208 meeting hours x 37.5 work hours per week x 52 work weeks per year for a total of 28.4 facilitators.
4. We increased the number to 34 facilitators to allow for sick leave, vacations, holidays, etc., and we added to that number an additional 16 to factor in at least one additional facilitator per region for all regions except Davidson, Shelby, Mid Cumberland, and East, which would have two extra facilitators, for a grand total of 50 facilitators.

facilitating and coaching skills, by whom and how their competency will be determined, and how they will interface with the OJT staff.

- Determination of specifics regarding when and how the Department will make staff retention and promotion decisions on the basis of competency evaluations.
- Development of a draft of the training curriculum for private providers and the processes DCS will utilize to ensure that private provider staff have the necessary level of competency.

Theme 3 Implementing the *Practice Model*

The third theme that emerges is the integration of the *Standard of Professional Practice for Serving Children and Families*. Executive staff has committed to the implementation of the *Practice Model*; however, significant work lies ahead in the actual embedding of the principles and practices into the day-to-day work of staff at all levels. Three one-day strategic planning sessions were held in the regions with all regions participating.

A key finding of these sessions was the need for greater clarity and specificity. Follow-up strategic planning sessions are planned—as well as study groups—to promote greater opportunity for dialogue and understanding of the explicit and implicit expectations. Core Leadership will be reading, discussing, and analyzing a chapter a week to strengthen understanding and identify opportunities for strategizing implementation. Plans are to move the study/implementation discussion into the work of the Regional Core Leadership and Implementation Teams. Communication strategies from Tip Sheets to Chat Rooms are being explored. It should be noted here that, while the *Practice Model* reinforces the principles and provisions of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*, it does not displace that Agreement.

Theme 4 Process Mapping/Redesigning Core Business Processes

Another critical theme is to review our core business processes to assess whether they promote or act as barriers to achieving positive outcomes for children. Early priorities for process mapping include: timely and comprehensive Child Protective Service investigations; placement processes and practices; overall adoption practices; implementation of psychotropic medication and restraint policies; and streamlining the flex fund policies. DCS must ensure that the entire system undergoes a serious review in relation to core business processes and practices. However, those identified above call for urgent attention.

An important outcome of the process of mapping and redesigning business processes will be agency “rightsizing.” Rightsizing is the process of evaluating every position in relationship to the mission and goals of the agency. It is a process meant to ensure that every full-time equivalent position is equal to a full-time workload that specifically addresses the agency’s statutory responsibility.

Implementing the *Practice Model* will require a major reallocation of human resources. In the future, the restructured agency will be represented by three primary groups of direct service providers:

1. Intake, investigation and initial assessment staff;
2. Ongoing case managers who continue the assessment and intervention process to ensure good outcomes for children and families; and
3. Specialists who support the ongoing case managers in their work to ensure high quality safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families served by DCS. These specialists will reflect a number of skill areas, including placement resources, community resources, adoption, therapeutic and treatment intervention and, well-being services.

DCS is in the very early stages of rightsizing the regions. Caseload analysis, as well as the role of the Community Services Agency, other community partners, staff and educational attorneys, and private provider services will all factor into the rightsizing process.

The process will be time-consuming and exhaustive. The end result will be a high-functioning agency able to identify staffing gaps and respond quickly and efficiently.

Theme 5 Quality Assurance/CQI

A final theme found throughout the implementation plan is the integration of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement principles and practices at every level, in every process, and in every function. Quality assurance and continuous quality improvement initiatives are used to assess child and family progress and develop case plans, to assess patterns and trends in child and family resource needs, to provide feedback to individual staff and teams, to set performance targets, to prepare budgets and justify resource allocations, to assure quality and determine staffing patterns, and to guide policy. The overarching goal of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement at the Tennessee Department of Children's Services is to improve overall organizational performance so as to empower the regions to assume an active role in improving best practice outcomes for children and families.

Outcomes

The Department is devoted to achieving compliance with the provisions of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement through implementation of the Path to Excellence. To that end, the Department has identified a number of specific reports tracking *Brian A.* requirements that will be provided to the Central and Regional Offices. These reports will provide statewide and region-specific data, along with information related to race and age where appropriate. In addition, in order to monitor compliance with the Outcomes of the Settlement Agreement, DCS will provide data on progress on relevant outcomes and performance measures at the relevant 18-month intervals contemplated by the Settlement Agreement. Following is a list of these reports, sorted by the frequency with which they will be distributed.

DCS Monthly Management Indicators:

1. Number and percent of CPS investigations for *Brian A.* Class members open beyond 60 days;
2. Size of the foster care population;
3. Percentage of children placed in family settings as opposed to congregate care;
4. Percentage of children placed within region or within 75 miles of home;
5. Number of new placements in foster care, sorted by (a) source of placement (court petition due to abuse/neglect; court petition for “unruly” child; court petition for delinquency; voluntary placement) and (b) placement location (with kin; with non-kin foster parents; in a congregate setting);
6. Number of discharges from foster care, sorted by discharge destination (reunification; adoption; planned permanent legal custody; “aged out” to independent living or adult custodial care; ran away);
7. The number and percentage of children staying in emergency or temporary facilities for more than 30 days (see Section VI.C.2.).
8. Average caseload size for DCS workers carrying foster care cases;
9. The number of workers with cases above a threshold level – in this case, the level required by the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement, as well as the specific number of cases above the cap each of these workers is carrying.
10. Performance Indicators/Practice Measures identified in Section XVI of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.

a. Child Welfare Outcomes

These measures will be reported on a rolling quarter³, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2004, and will include the following:

- i. Reunification
- ii. Adoption/Contract Signed*
- iii. Placement Moves
- iv. Length of Time in Placement
- v. Re-entry into Care
- vi. Adoptive Placement Disruption*
- vii. Achievement Measures upon Discharge*

b. Performance Indicators/Practice

These indicators will be reported on a monthly basis, beginning in October 2004.

- i. Parent-Child Visiting
- ii. Sibling Visiting
- iii. Placing Siblings Together

³ Rolling quarters are used here because they take into account the passage of time and other factors—such as new policies or tracking methods—that could affect the performance of an outcome. The reporting period for a rolling quarter would begin with the last day of the last month of whatever the current calendar year quarter might be (i.e. December 31, 2004) and would extend back twelve months (i.e. to January 1, 2004). For the next quarter, the reporting period would again begin with the last day of the last month of the next calendar year quarter (in this case, March 31, 2005) and would again extend back twelve months (i.e., to April 1, 2004).

- iv. Filing A Petition to Terminate Rights
- v. Placement in an Adoptive Home*
- vi. Goal of Permanent or Long-term Foster Care
- vii. In-Region Placements

*

Resource Development

Significant fiscal policy revisions have been and will be developed in Central Office in an effort to be more responsive to the field. For example, travel reimbursement of the staff has been a complex and time-consuming process more focused on audit exceptions than on reimbursing staff for expenses they incurred on the state's behalf. These policies are in the process of being completed online to expedite processing. In regard to contract revisions, DCS is currently inserting preliminary performance-based language into provider contracts. This is, however, a developmental process that will need revising and strengthening on a continuing basis following implementation. In addition, guidelines, procedures, and tracking mechanisms for the use of Needs Assessment dollars will be developed as part of the *Brian A. Internal Monitoring Plan* (see Domain VIII).

Resources

The Department's commitment to implementing the Path to Excellence will be demonstrated over the next thirty-three months in a number of consistent, sustained and purposeful actions intent on achieving results.

The following are specific actions taken to support the Plan:

- a. 2005 budget enhancements (reflected in the first chart).
- b. Salary enhancements over a three-year period (reflected in second chart).
- c. Funding of the training consortium.
- d. Funding of the recommendations of the needs assessment.

#	Description	Total	State	Federal	Other	Positions
1	Provide positions for data management and to meet reporting requirements	146,500	103,900	3,500	39,100	3
2	Provide 2% rate increase for DCS foster parents to meet USDA cost of living standard	517,800	349,000	168,800	0	0
3	Provide 2% rate increase for special needs adoptive parents	739,000	396,600	342,400	0	0
4	Provide funding to meet increase in adoption assistance caseload	2,891,000	1,213,800	1,677,200	0	0
5	Provide additional DCS Staff Training	376,600	254,500	12,000	110,100	6
6	Monitor Contract Agency In-Service Training	51,700	13,700	7,800	30,200	1
7	Increase DCS Foster Home Capacity	106,500	72,000	3,400	31,100	2
8	Manage Foster Home Approval and Child Placement process and increase sibling placements	53,200	36,000	1,700	15,500	1

* Reports for these outcomes/indicators are being actively developed but will not be ready until second quarter 2005.

#	Description	Total	State	Federal	Other	Positions
9	Assure investigations of CPS referrals for children in custody are completed in timely manner	295,400	295,400		0	6
10	Provide 1 attorney and 3 legal assistants for timely filing and trying of petitions to terminate	216,300	133,700	7,600	75,000	4
11	Address Disparity in Adoption Assistance Rates	1,000,000	536,700	463,300	0	0
	FY'05 Enhancements: <i>Brian A. Settlement Compliance</i>	6,394,000	3,405,300	2,687,700	301,000	23

The Commissioner has requested and the Administration has agreed to support the following salary enhancements over the 3-year period beginning July, 2004.

	Number of Staff	Current Starting Salaries	Proposed Starting Salaries		
			Year 1 FY 2005	Year 2 FY 2006	Year 3 FY 2007
Case Mgr Series	Staff	Salaries			
Case Manager 1	338	22,500	24,652	26,804	28,956
Case Manager 2	1,445	25,476	28,044	30,612	33,180
Case Manager 3	212	26,580	29,248	31,916	34,584
Case Manager 4	333	28,860	31,740	34,620	37,500
Team Coordinator	91	34,344	37,664	40,984	44,304
Total Cost			5,987,100	6,360,200	6,780,100
Recommended State Salary Increase			<u>2%</u> 1,596,600	<u>?</u>	<u>?</u>
Total Balance Needed			4,390,500	6,360,200	6,780,100
State			3,170,000	4,592,100	4,813,900
Federal			351,200	508,800	542,400
Other			869,300	1,259,300	1,423,800
DCS State Resources			1,467,200		
Balance of State Needed			1,702,800	4,592,100	4,813,900

- The equivalent of a two-step annual increase each year for the next three years.
- The total first-year cost is \$4.4 million of which \$3.2 million is state dollars.
- DCS will reallocate \$1.5 million in state dollars to support the first-year increase.
- First-year costs in new state dollars will equal \$1.7 million.
- We are requesting \$1.7 million from the Governor's recommended FY 2005 classification compensation improvement to begin implementing this plan.
- New state dollars in each of the subsequent two years will equal approximately \$4.8 million, which would be offset by any state employee salary increases.
- We anticipate federal match at approximately 35%.
- By the third year, our Case Manager salaries should be equal to, or greater than, the average starting salaries in the neighboring states.

Kent Berkley and Michele Munson, M&B Consultants, will provide coordination and effective utilization of the consultants identified in the Implementation Plan beginning July 2004. DCS has requested or will be contracting for consultation and technical assistance in the following areas:

Consultants Available to Support the Plan

Domain	Consultant	Description
Leadership	Tom English Consultant, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Follow up on work done with each region regarding readiness for organizational change and implementation plan development.
Developing a Qualified Workforce	Marge Gildner Private Consultant	Continue and expand her effort working with UT and the Consortium related to the entire range of DCS training needs. Marge Gildner's involvement is so critical to the building of a strong training program that discussions related to the specific number of days and cost for the next year have already begun and are proceeding. Initial estimates are for 75 days over the next 12 months.
Child and Family Team Meetings	Sarah Greenblatt, Casey Family Services Paul Vincent, Child Welfare Practice Group Beth Leatherman, Family to Family	DCS is committed to a strong family engagement process of working closely with natural parents to provide safety, permanence, and well-being for children. Over the next 90-120 days, DCS intends to work closely with these experts to clarify, analyze, and make decisions regarding the most appropriate use of Team Decision Making (TDM) and Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM). Once the necessary decisions have been reached, DCS will need to work with these consultants to design the appropriate training and administrative support to carry these decisions forward.
Child Protective Services	Chris Baird Children's Research Center Madison, Wisconsin	Follow up on work begun related to structured decision making on key decision points in the "life" of CPS cases. Assist in a workload analysis of current CPS program.
Child Protective Services	Paul Vincent Child Welfare Practice Group	Request technical assistance through the TAC for the development and implementation of a functional assessment process throughout the life of a child welfare case. Initially, DCS needs technical assistance to implement the functional assessment process at the time of a child's removal from home. We also need to continue work with the Child Welfare Practice Group around successfully implementing CFTM
Child Protective Services	Jean McIntosh Private Consultant	Continue Ms. McIntosh's involvement with the Functional Assessment process. DCS would like to engage her services related to a review and revision of overall CPS services.
Placement	Fred Wulczyn Chapin Hall, University of Chicago	Continue contract and work with Chapin Hall related to data analysis and performance-based contracting. Engage Chapin Hall to initially do the work while also working with DCS to build internal capacity.
Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Data Management	Lynn Usher University of North Carolina	Provide technical support, consultation, and training related to continuous quality improvement. DCS intends to use these skills beyond the area of placement, but this is where initial efforts must be focused.
Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Data Management	Paul Vincent Child Welfare Practice Group	Request technical assistance through the TAC for training in performing quality case reviews.

Domain	Consultant	Description
Foster, Kinship, and Adoptive Home Development and Support	Terri Ali Denise Goodman Annie E. Casey Foundation	Request technical assistance from Annie E. Casey Family-to-Family Program related to recruitment and retention of resource families, building community collaboration, pre-service and ongoing training for resource parents and team decision making.
Resource Development	Norm Zimlich Private Consultant	Advanced training and consultation for the Executive Director of Program Support related to federal funding systems and the appropriate utilization of each based on specific child welfare services needs. Focus on funding needs related to implementation of the Path to Excellence.
Resource Development	Dr. Chris Billonce Private Psychiatrist	Technical assistance, training, and consultation related to comprehensive implementation of the Department's policies related to psychotropic medication, seclusion and restraint.
Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Home Development and Support	Jennifer Miller Cornerstone Consulting	Provide information and training regarding subsidized guardianship in other states; assist in the development of a proposed guardianship structure; develop materials and review relevant documents for comments and refinement.
Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Data Management	Peter Watson and Jennifer Agosti National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement	Technical assistance, training, and consultation related to implementation of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities and processes statewide.
Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Data Management	Ray Foster Human Systems and Outcomes, Inc.	Provide technical assistance and consultation regarding the integration of CPORT, CFSR and QSR elements to develop a Tennessee Quality Service Review Process.

As other areas of need are identified, the Department of Children's Services, in consultation with the TAC, will engage additional external assistance. Even as internal capacity is developed, there may well be needs identified that require additional full time staff with specialized skill sets.

Funding necessary to support external consultants has been built into the University Training Consortium budget.

Implementation of the Racial Disparity Study

In accordance with the Stipulation, the following recommendations of the Racial Disparity Study issued by Dr. Ruth McRoy will be incorporated into the plan and implemented by the Department as the sole implementation plan for the Study. DCS will:

- Report *Brian A.* outcomes by race on a regular basis effective immediately and will, subject to TAC review and approval, identify and report on relevant performance measures by race, and will monitor and report private provider outcome and performance data by race where appropriate.
- Expand the relative caregiver program (including necessary funding) to all twelve regions by May 2006.

- Increase the number of non-relative African American foster and adoptive families, kinship foster homes and relative caregivers through targeted recruitment efforts. Regional recruitment plans will identify outreach and recruitment strategies (for example, partnering with African American churches and historically black colleges and universities) and will establish recruitment targets. (For a complete description of the goal and strategies related to the expansion of the relative caregiver program, refer to Domain VI, Goal 3, Strategy 1, and related action steps in the Task Plan.)
- Explore whether there is an inappropriate use of unfunded/underfunded relative placements for African American children and address any disparities in support for African American relative caregivers. DCS will revise policies and procedures to correct or reduce such inappropriate use. DCS will give particular focus to the extent to which DCS staff is trained and knowledgeable about all financial options for potential African American relative and kinship caregivers, including kinship foster care and relative caregiver program options, and the manner and extent to which these options are communicated to African American kinship and relative caregivers. (By 9/30/2005)
- Ensure that children in kinship foster homes are visited with the same frequency as children in non-kinship foster homes. (For a complete description of the goal and strategies related to visitation, refer to Domain V, Goal 3, Strategies 1-2, and related action steps in the Task Plan.)
- Explore the issue of whether DCS case managers or other staff engage in or support practices which divert dependent and neglected African American children into the juvenile justice system and present a plan subject to TAC review and approval to appropriately address any such practices. (By 12/31/2005)
- Develop and implement recruitment and hiring strategies designed to increase diversity of staff at levels of the organization that lack such diversity and to maintain and support diversity at those levels of the organization that reflect such diversity. (For a complete description of the goal and strategies related to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff, refer to Domain II, Goal 1, Strategies 1-5, and related action steps in the Task Plan.)
- Develop and deliver cultural competency training throughout the organization and set standards for cultural competency that is expected of staff. (An implementation date will be established in the Training Plan, subject to TAC review and approval.)
- Explore options, including applying for a IV-E waiver and drafting legislation for the Governor's consideration, to create an additional permanency option of subsidized guardianship.

As part of DCS's implementation of the recommendations of the Racial Disparity Study, the Department will complete a cultural competency planning process that includes the development and delivery of training. Such training would be subject to the review and approval of the TAC to ensure that it is consistent with the overall training plan.

**Implementation of the Recommendations
of the Brian A. Required Needs Assessments,
including the 2004 Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Home Recruitment and
Retention and Independent Living/Transition to Adulthood Services**

The TAC is in the process of completing the second Needs Assessment (required under the terms of the Settlement Agreement), which will be finalized after the approval date of the Implementation Plan.

The Settlement Agreement provides for an annual needs assessment, conducted under the supervision of the TAC. DCS is required by the terms of the Settlement Agreement to implement the recommendations of the Needs Assessment and the Settlement Agreement establishes additional funding specifically dedicated to implementing those recommendations.

These provisions of the Settlement Agreement were intended to ensure that there were substantial additional resources provided to support the “deinstitutionalization” of class members—decreasing reliance on congregate care placements in favor of more normalized family settings through increased development and support of foster and adoptive family options (both relative and non relative) and through increased home-based services for children and their families, both to reduce the time to reunification and prevent re-entry into custody. The increased funding was intended to support the development of sufficient resources within regions to ensure that children who have to come into care can be placed near their homes (preferably within their home communities, but at a minimum within the 75 mile radius of their home), so that they can better maintain contact with and connections to their families and their communities.

The “Needs Assessment Dollars” were envisioned by the parties as a vehicle for providing “start up” money to allow the immediate development of additional foster homes and therapeutic placements over and above the present number available in counties—seed money to “jump start” this critically important shift to the preferred placements and services, with the understanding that by making these new additional foster family placements and supportive services available the Department would generate savings from reduced reliance on congregate care and shorter time lines to achieving permanency. It was anticipated that these savings could then be shifted to the ongoing support of the kinds of placements and services developed and supported initially by the Needs Assessment Dollars.

The Needs Assessment Dollars were also seen as a vehicle to provide some additional flexible funding for specific kinds of expenditures that were not sufficiently available through other sources of funding—from providing some immediate funding for home improvements that could hasten or make possible reunification or placement with a relative to making recreational and extracurricular opportunities and supports more readily available to individual class members.

DCS will implement the recommendations of all Brian A. Needs Assessments and, as part of implementation, will establish a system for tracking and monitoring use of Needs Assessment expenditures and provide the TAC and the plaintiffs with a separate semi-annual accounting of the expenditures of Needs Assessment Dollars.

Path to Excellence

Part II

Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies

Domain I: Leadership and Management

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months):**
 - ✓ A strong partnership between DCS Central Office and the Regions will be in place to facilitate seamless service provision in support of family-centered casework and case planning.
 - ✓ DCS will be a learning organization that involves core and regional leadership teams in the diagnosis, design, and execution of the ongoing organizational and system reform effort.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ DCS will have policies and DCS staff and key stakeholders will have attitudes and exhibit behaviors that foster the achievement of positive outcomes for children in DCS custody and their families in Tennessee in general and in cross-cultural situations in particular.

Goals:

1. By July 2004, DCS will have key leadership staff in place for the organization.

Strategies:

- Recruit a well-qualified Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Leadership Team.
- Establish structures and mechanisms that shift agency culture toward becoming a learning organization.
- Build Regional Leadership Teams capable of developing implementation plans and achieving successful outcomes.

2. By October 2004, DCS will be actively implementing a redesign of the Regional/Central Office relationship.

Strategies:

- Restructure Central Office to provide lines of responsibility, support and technical assistance to direct service staff.
- Increase Regional Administrators' authority and responsibility to achieve positive results for children and families.
- Build regional capacity to develop, execute, and evaluate regional implementation plans.

- Evaluate Regional Administrators based on outcome and performance measures.
3. By May 2005, necessary policy updates for compliance with the provisions of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* and the *DCS Standards of Professional Practice for Serving Children and Families* will be implemented.

Strategy:

- Review and revise DCS policies to ensure congruence with the *DCS Standards of Professional Practice for Serving Children and Families*.
4. By May 2005, DCS will be actively implementing a plan to improve the cultural competency of the agency.

Strategy:

- Develop and actively implement a cultural competency plan and the Racial Disparity Study as set forth in the Overview to improve the ability of the agency to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Domain II: Generate and Implement Recruitment Plans to Develop a Diverse and Qualified Workforce

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months):**
 - ✓ All DCS direct service case management and supervisory staff will be trained and promoted in a manner consistent with the provisions of Section V. of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.
 - ✓ All direct service workers employed by provider agencies contracted by DCS and performing casework activities mirroring the duties of DCS case managers will be trained in keeping with Section V.E.4 of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.
 - ✓ DCS will use employee evaluation processes that focus on increasing staff competencies and professional status in ways that empower staff to contribute to the fulfillment of the Department's mission and purpose.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ Salaries of DCS direct services staff will at least be comparable to the salaries of staff at competing entities (e.g. private provider agencies and public school systems) within the state.
 - ✓ DCS will be staffed across all levels and functional areas by employees of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities who possess the values, beliefs, knowledge, abilities, and skills needed to sustain family-centered casework and case planning.
 - ✓ Salaries of DCS direct services staff will be comparable to the salaries of their counterparts in neighboring states.

Goals:

1. By February 2005, DCS will implement policies and practices to recruit, hire, and retain staff with qualifications of the caliber described in Section V of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.

Strategies:

- Generate and implement recruitment plans to develop a diverse and qualified workforce.
- Implement an incentive-based hiring pipeline with a university consortium.
- Initiate steps to improve salary for direct service staff.
- Develop and implement relevant criteria for hiring casework staff with qualifications consistent with the provisions set forth in Section V of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.
- Hire, retain, and maintain sufficient staff (in both numbers and qualifications) necessary to carry out the work required by the Implementation Plan and the Settlement Agreement and to meet and maintain the caseload standards set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

2. By January 2005, DCS will have training resources, policies/practices, finances, and monitoring systems in place to support and measure the development of staff and provider competencies in the manner described in Sections V.B.1-3, V. D, and V.E.1-4 of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*.

Strategies:

- Develop a DCS/university collaborative to ensure that the educational requirements prescribed in Section V. of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* are satisfied for all new and existing staff and to meet the need for highly trained and qualified staff.
 - Develop and deliver competency based pre-service training for all new caseworkers.
 - Develop and deliver competency based pre-service training for all newly promoted or incoming supervisors.
 - Reinforce best practice through Social Work Skills In-Service Training.
 - Develop and begin delivering competency-based in-service training.
 - Develop and deliver an undergraduate certification program in public child welfare.
 - Develop and implement DCS/Provider pilot Social Work Skills Training.
 - Develop a detailed pre-service training plan for new case managers and social work skills training plan for existing case managers and submit to TAC for approval. This strategy incorporates the various specific requirements for the pre-service training plan that are set forth at pages 9 and 10 of the Overview Section.
3. By October 2005, DCS will begin implementing a plan for measuring and improving employee satisfaction and retention rates.

Strategies:

- Assess employee satisfaction and issues affecting retention.
- Develop a DCS employee recognition system.
- Improve and expand the stipend program in compliance with Section V.C. of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*.

Domain III: Child and Family Team Meetings

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 12 months):**
 - ✓ The planning process for children will occur in keeping with the provisions of Section VII of the Settlement Agreement.
 - ✓ Fifty facilitators will be allocated among the twelve regions.
 - ✓ 90% of the skilled, trained, immediately accessible Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators.
 - ✓ 50% of the Child and Family Case Managers statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.
 - ✓ In four regions, 90% of the Child and Family Team Meetings held will be facilitated by a facilitator or case manager who has completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.
- **Intermediate-term (within 24 months):**
 - ✓ 90% of the skilled, trained, immediately accessible Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators.
 - ✓ 70% of the Child and Family Case Managers statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.
 - ✓ In eight regions, 90% of the Child and Family Team Meetings held will be facilitated by a facilitator or case manager who has completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ 90% of the skilled, trained, immediately accessible Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitators.
 - ✓ 90% of the Child and Family Case Managers statewide will have completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.
 - ✓ In all regions, 90% of the Child and Family Team Meetings held will be facilitated by a facilitator or case manager who has completed the process of coaching and mentoring and passed the skills-based competency review for CFTM facilitation.

Goals:

1. By March 2005, DCS will develop the regional capacity needed to conduct Child and Family Team Meetings statewide.

Strategies:

- Provide skills-based training statewide to teach family-centered casework and case planning.
 - Develop and implement regional plans for Child and Family Team Meetings.
 - Develop a system for ongoing coaching and mentoring support persons with responsibility for facilitating Child and Family Team Meetings statewide.
2. By January 2006, Child and Family Team Meetings will be held statewide in a manner that is consistent with good practice as defined by the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*, the DCS *Practice Model*, and the training curricula and that yields increases in regional permanency rates.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement regional plans for redesigning the DCS structure to improve permanency planning (one worker/one child).
- Develop data analysis and continuous quality improvement process to support implementation and necessary requirements.

Domain IV: Child Protective Services

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months):**
 - ✓ DCS's system for receiving, screening, and investigating reports of child abuse and neglect for foster children in state custody will be adequately staffed to ensure that all reports are investigated within established time periods.
 - ✓ The reliability of existing baseline data on timely completion of CPS investigations will be determined and new baselines established where needed.
 - ✓ 80% of all CPS investigations will be completed within 60 days.
 - ✓ 100% of CPS investigations for *Brian A.* class members open more than 60 days as of the approval date of this Implementation Plan will be closed.
 - ✓ 85% of all ongoing and new CPS investigations for *Brian A.* class members as of the approval date of this Implementation Plan will be completed within 60 days.
 - ✓ 60% of CPS investigations will include evidence of the use of risk assessment protocols.
 - ✓ 60% of CPS investigations will be based on a full and systematic analysis of a family's situation and the factors placing a child at risk.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ 85% of all CPS investigations will be completed within 60 days.
 - ✓ 95% of CPS investigations of in-custody abuse/neglect of *Brian A.* class members will be completed within 60 days.
 - ✓ 85% of CPS investigations will include evidence of the use of risk assessment protocols.
 - ✓ 85% of CPS investigations will be based on a full and systematic analysis of a family's situation and the factors placing a child at risk.

Goals:

1. By September 2005, DCS will increase the number of CPS investigations that are initiated in a timely manner and completed within the required 60 days.

Strategies:

- Deploy additional staff to regions that have backlogs of past due investigations through the hiring of retired and contract investigators.
- Implement Centralized Intake, beginning in four regions and then statewide.
- Conduct workload analysis to determine appropriate number of investigative staff by region and take necessary steps to provide sufficient staff as indicated in the workload analysis.
- Develop capacity to collect, analyze, and utilize state and regional data on timely initiation and completion of investigations.

2. By December 31, 2004, any allegation that a child who is in state custody has been abused while in state custody will be promptly investigated and the investigation completed within the time frames required by law.

Strategies:

- Review and revise the DCS policy manual related to CPS investigations of children in custodial care.
 - Train SIU and licensing staff on revised policies and protocols.
 - Develop a process for identifying and prioritizing allegations that a child in state custody was abused and neglected while in state custody.
 - Provide sufficient staffing to promptly investigate these allegations.
 - Implement timely corrective action plans for institutional, group, residential, or contract agency providers where the Division of Continuous Quality Improvement has found a pattern of abuse or neglect.
3. By September 2006, DCS will improve the quality of assessment and decision-making in CPS investigations.

Strategies:

- Implement structured decision-making (SDM) process, beginning in two regions and moving statewide.
 - Implement CFTMs as part of the CPS decision-making process.
 - Implement functional assessment process, beginning in two regions and moving to statewide implementation.
4. By July 2005, in collaboration with the CSAs, provide services and supports to families to prevent reoccurrence of maltreatment and to prevent entry/reentry into foster care.

Strategies:

- Revise DCS/CSA contracts to include clear performance expectations and measures to address the accountability of CSA's delivering services to children and families.
- Track the expenditures and uses of flex and needs assessment funds for in-home and preventive services.

Domain V: Placement Process

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months)**
 - ✓ A solid baseline derived from reliable placement data will be established.
 - ✓ Compliance with the child welfare outcomes and performance measures identified in Section XVI.A.1-5 and Section XVI.B.1-3, 5 and 7 of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* will be achieved in keeping with the timeframes for Period II specified in those sections and as modified by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation.
 - ✓ All children will be visited by their case managers in accordance with the standards set out in the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ *Brian A.* outcomes and performance measures will be utilized to track placement performance by cohorts.
 - ✓ Compliance with the child welfare outcomes and performance measures identified in Section XVI.A.1-5 and Section XVI.B.1-3, 5 and 7 of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* will be achieved in keeping with the timeframes specified for Period III in those sections and as modified by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation.

Goals:

1. By April 2006, DCS will refine and redesign placement processes to integrate assessments, matching, utilization reviews, and resource expertise into a unified placement system.

Strategy:

- Convene a DCS/Provider partnership cross-functional team to develop a unified placement system. This strategy incorporates the description of the DCS/Provider partnership cross-functional team as set forth in Theme 1 at pages 7 and 8 of the Overview.
2. By August 2006, DCS will develop and implement protocols to reduce trauma experienced by children during the transition to placement.

Strategies:

- Develop and utilize a protocol to minimize trauma associated with emergency removals and revise policies and procedures governing after-hours and emergency placement of children.
- Develop interstate border state agreements to expedite placement with relatives and family resources of custodial children.

3. By March 2006, DCS will implement quality visitation for every child in custody that complies with the requirements for worker/child, worker/family, family/child, and sibling visitations set forth in Section VI.K of the Settlement Agreement.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement quality visitation process to facilitate attachment and support placements.
 - Develop data analysis and continuous quality improvement processes to support implementation of quality visitation processes.
4. DCS will ensure that issues critical to the well-being of children in care are appropriately addressed.

Strategies:

- Ensure that every child coming into care receives a medical exam within 30 days of coming into care, and, if appropriate, a psychological evaluation within 30 days and appropriate follow-up.
- Develop and actively implement, subject to TAC review and approval, a plan for ensuring compliance with the newly promulgated policies regarding use of psychotropic medications, restraints and seclusion.
- Continue to implement the education plan previously approved by the TAC and, in consultation with and subject to TAC approval, completing the review of the “in-house” schools by arranging for an appropriate external evaluation of the remaining “in-house” schools.

Domain VI: Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Home Development and Support

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months):**
 - ✓ DCS foster care resources will be of sufficient number and quality to enable the placement of 85% of the children coming into care—regardless of age, needs, or sibling group size—in the least restrictive and most family-like environment possible within at least a 75-mile radius of their own neighborhoods or communities.
 - ✓ At least 45% of children freed for adoption during Period II as defined in Section XVI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* and as amended by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation (for whom termination of parental rights was obtained) shall have an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within six months of the termination of parental rights.
 - ✓ Of the remaining children in the class who have been freed for adoption as defined in Section XVI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* and as amended by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation (for whom termination of parental rights has been obtained) who have not had an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within six months, at least 70% shall have an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within 12 months of termination of parental rights.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ DCS foster homes will be of sufficient number and quality to enable the placement of children coming into care under age 13—regardless of age, needs, or sibling group size—with a quality resource family located in their own home county, neighborhood or community.
 - ✓ DCS foster homes will be of sufficient number and quality to enable the placement of 85% of the children coming into care over 13—regardless of age, needs, or sibling group size—with a quality resource family located in their own home county, neighborhood or community.
 - ✓ At least 65% of children freed for adoption during Period III as defined by Section XVI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* and as amended by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation (for whom termination of parental rights was obtained) shall have an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within six months of the termination of parental rights.
 - ✓ Of the remaining children in the class who have been freed for adoption during Period III as defined by Section XVI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* and as amended by paragraph 25 of the Stipulation (for whom termination of parental rights was obtained) who have not had an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within six months, at least 85% shall have an adoptive home identified and an adoption contract signed within 12 months of termination of parental rights.

Goals:

1. By December 2004, DCS regions will be actively implementing comprehensive regional foster care and adoption recruitment and retention plans based on the Racial Disparity Study as set forth in the Overview and the ongoing assessment of needs and resources with specific goals for teenagers, children of color, and those with severe medical conditions.

Strategies:

- Develop and begin implementing regional recruitment and retention plans based on ongoing assessment of needs and resources.
 - Develop and implement a statewide policy that formally combines the recruitment, training, and licensing functions for foster and adoptive families.
 - Develop data analysis and continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes to support resource family recruitment and retention work.
2. By July 2005, DCS will develop regional capacity to promote targeted and child-specific recruitment efforts and will undertake child-specific recruitment activities for children whose sole permanency goal is adoption.

Strategies:

- Provide training, consultation, and technical assistance on child-specific and targeted recruitment.
 - Develop and begin actively implementing regional and DCS plans to reduce the number of children with permanency goals of adoption who are waiting for a permanent family.
3. By January 2006, DCS will increase placement options through the early identification and support of relative resources.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement statewide policies to support children placed with kin through the public child welfare system and that identify:
 - a. The specific requirements for relatives who will take children in the custody of the agency;
 - b. The methods for improving the timeliness and outcomes of diligent searches for relatives and kin;
 - c. The methods for determining how relatives will be found during crises, how they will be licensed on an ongoing basis, under what circumstances children may and may not be placed into a relative's custody, and how the children's needs for safety and permanency will be maintained by DCS supports available to relative caregivers.
- Develop and provide to families accurate and easy-to-follow information regarding available support.
- Implement statewide relative caregiver program.
- Study and develop recommendations to implement subsidized guardianship.

4. By December 2006, DCS will increase departmental and regional capacity to support and retain resource families.

Strategies:

- Prepare and support resource families through comprehensive, relevant and timely pre-service training and approval process.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive support system for resource families.

Domain VII: Resource Development

Desired Outcomes:

- **Short-term (within 15 months):**
 - ✓ DCS direct service workers will have clear guidelines for flexible fund access and utilization.
 - ✓ DCS will implement a performance-based contracting system.
 - ✓ DCS will utilize appropriate funding streams to support child welfare services.
- **Long-term (within 33 months):**
 - ✓ DCS will maximize existing funding streams and have a system in place for the ongoing identification of new sources of funding.
 - ✓ DCS will provide the services needed in rural areas and in cross-cultural situations to support family-centered casework and case planning.

Goals:

1. By August 2005, DCS will have a fiscal management plan to maximize resources needed to implement the Path to Excellence and the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement and begin securing necessary resources.

Strategies:

- Identify appropriate funding streams to support child welfare services.
 - Conduct short- and long-term fiscal analysis of Path to Excellence Implementation Plan.
 - Assess and simplify the flex and needs assessment funding process.
2. By July 2005, DCS will identify cultural and demographic resource barriers and increase its capacity to provide services in rural jurisdictions and in cross-cultural situations in keeping with the Section IV.A. of the *Brian A.* Settlement Agreement.

Strategies:

- Conduct targeted symposium on challenges and solutions to improve service provision in rural jurisdictions.
- Recruit and support minority and community-based vendors. See Domain I, Goal 4, Strategy 1.

3. By September 2004, DCS will develop mechanisms and tools to clarify expectations of and improve communication with contract providers and system partners.

Strategies:

- Revise provider policy manual.
- Review and revise the PAR process.
- Identify and incorporate performance indicators into private provider contracts and establish baselines for those indicators.
- Revise DCS/CSA contracts to include clear performance expectations and measures to address the accountability of CSAs delivering services to children and families. See Domain IV, Goal 4, Strategy 1.
- Track the expenditures and uses of flex and needs assessment funds for in-home and preventive services. See Domain IV, Goals 4, Strategy 2.

Domain VIII: Quality Assurance, Continuous Quality Improvement and Data Management

Desired Outcomes:

(Within 15 months)

- ✓ Data management in DCS will have improved in quality and relevance through establishing baselines and monitoring performance on key child and family program outcomes as well as through the development and utilization of feedback loops and other continuous quality improvement strategies.
- ✓ Standardized instruments, protocols and templates will be used for regional and statewide reviews and for tracking, measuring, and reporting in the regions and statewide on *Brian A.* outcomes, performance indicators, process indicators, and other requirements appropriate for aggregate reporting.
- ✓ Entry cohort, point-in-time, and case file review data will be utilized for assessment and periodic reporting on DCS's progress in improving program outcomes for children and families and in reporting on *Brian A.* outcomes/performance indicators and process requirements.
- ✓ Continuous quality improvement teams will be fully operational in Central Office and the regions and will work to ensure that all information collected and analyzed is used to strengthen effective service delivery and/or to improve child welfare practices and outcomes.
- ✓ Key stakeholders will be engaged in assuring quality and improving performance through participation in regional or Central Office continuous quality improvement teams that use a three-tiered problem-solving process involving active and ongoing interaction between local, regional, and statewide teams.
- ✓ The ability to analyze data and to use data in planning and decision-making will have been strengthened through training and support provided by Fred Wulczyn and Lynn Usher.
- ✓ Tracking, analyzing and reporting on point-in-time performance data to enhance quality and improve outcomes will be regular and ongoing, with the quantity and quality of reports being produced increasing in proportion to the steady and continuous increase in DCS capacity.

(Within 33 months)

- ✓ DCS will have a learning environment and a culture of quality that encourages performance excellence and supports measurable and continuous improvement in outcomes for key stakeholders.

Goals

1. By May 2005, DCS will have the necessary infrastructure to support statewide continuous quality improvement.

Strategies:

- Create a learning environment of continuous quality improvement within DCS.
 - Develop a plan by October 31, 2004, for implementing quality assurance and continuous quality improvement organization-wide, subject to the review and approval of the TAC.
 - Establish and appropriately staff a Division of Continuous Quality Improvement within the Office of Performance Enhancement to serve as the central coordinating body for statewide continuous quality improvement efforts and to comply with Section XI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*.
 - Provide structure and sufficient resources for the integration of continuous quality improvement throughout the organization.
2. By April 2005, DCS will have the information, tools, and capacities needed to implement quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities and processes.

Strategies:

- Develop a data management plan that provides for the collection and provision of data on key indicators by, where appropriate, case manager, team, and region for use as a management tool in improving performance. This plan will also:
 - Provide for the tracking and analysis of performance on *Brian A.* outcomes and performance measures;
 - Set benchmarks for achieving results within the timeframes and in the manner specified by Section XVI of the *Brian A. Settlement Agreement*;
 - Establish feedback processes that ensure broad data dissemination as well as the development of corrective action and the effective monitoring of and reporting on progress of any action steps taken for improvement.
- Ensure data integrity and accuracy as well as SACWIS accessibility, functionality, and user acceptance.
- Initiate collaboration with CPORT to increase the relevance and utility of external reviews.
- Design and implement a multi-tiered internal review structure to include team, regional, and statewide case record and qualitative service reviews, with a statewide statistically significant sample of cases being reviewed each year.
- Establish and utilize a stakeholder feedback system.
- Begin Council on Accreditation (COA) process for accreditation.